



CLEAN OHIO GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

District Fifteen Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC) PROGRAM YEAR 18 (2024) POLICIES AND APPLICATION MANUAL

The information in this document relates directly to the District 15 NRAC Project Evaluation Methodology. The NRAC evaluation process utilizes the evaluation criteria outlined in ORC Section 164.24. The NRAC assigns points and weight factors to each of the evaluation criteria in order to determine which projects should be approved for Clean Ohio Conservation funding.

CLEAN OHIO GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS & ORIENTATION

In 2000, the State of Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the state to sell bonds and other obligations for the Clean Ohio Program. This program provides grants for open space and watershed conservation, farmland preservation and recreational trails. Information on these Clean Ohio Programs can be obtained at www.pwc.ohio.gov/Clean-Ohio-Application

The Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program provides funds to preserve open spaces, sensitive ecological areas, and stream corridors. The Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) is responsible for administering the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program through the 19 NRAC districts.

The District 15 Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC) is responsible for administering the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program in the following counties: Fayette, Highland, Brown, Adams, Ross, Pike, Scioto, Vinton, Jackson, Lawrence and Gallia.



The District 15 Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC) is responsible for:

1. Promoting the development and improvement of District 15's open space and the protection and enhancement of riparian corridors and watersheds; and
2. Evaluating and selecting applications from local jurisdictions within District 15 for financial assistance from the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program.

DISTRICT 15 NATURAL RESOURCES ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

The District 15 Public Works Integrating Committee (DPWIC), as directed in the Ohio Revised Code Section 164.21, appoints the members of the District 15 Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC). When fully appointed, the NRAC consists of eleven (11) members, with one (1) member being from the appointing integrating committee (DPWIC) and one (1) member from a District 15 Soil and Water Conservation District.

The other nine (9) members are appointed from categories of organizations, units of government or agencies as prescribed in ORC 164.21(A)(1). When fully appointed, there is at least one representative from each group:

Group 1: County, municipal corporation, township, conservancy district, regional or joint district or unit of government, or regional or joint political subdivision located in the geographical jurisdiction of the DPWIC.

Group 2: Conservation or environmental advocacy organization, an organization with a primary interest in watershed protection and restoration, the department of natural resources, the environmental protection agency, or the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Group 3: A city park system or metropolitan park system or a board of park commissioners located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee, a statewide parks and recreation organization, or the U.S. National Park Service.

Group 4: A statewide organization representing agriculture, an organization representing forestry interests, the department of agriculture, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Group 5: An organization representing business, local realtors, or a planning agency, including a port authority, located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee.

CONTACTS AND ASSISTANCE FOR DISTRICT 15

For the most updated information on District 15, including contact information, see:

<https://www.pwc.ohio.gov/District/District-15>

Ohio Public Works Program Rep in Columbus

Nick Rose 614.745.5510 nick.rose@pwc.oh.gov

Liaison for the District 15 Natural Resources Assistance Council

Isaac Dixon, Research Planning Specialist, Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission, 73 Progress Dr, Waverly, OH 45690. **Phone:** 740-947-2853 or in Ohio 800-223-7491, **Email:** idxon@ovrdc.org

MEMBERS DISTRICT 15

OPWC Committee Member

- Dow Saunders — City Manager Gallipolis, 740-446-1789 citymanager@gallipoliscity.com

Soil and Water Conservation

- Brigitte Hisey — Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District, 740-313-3212
brigitte.hisey@fayette-co-oh.com

Group 1 (local governments)

A county, municipal corporation, township, conservancy district, regional or joint district or unit of local government, or regional or joint political subdivision that is located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee

1. Craig DeAtley (Chair) — Scioto County, 740-285-2725 craig@c21empire.com
2. Jennifer Chadler — Pike County, 740-289-8154

Group 2 (conservation organization)

A conservation organization, an environmental advocacy organization, and organization with a primary interest in watershed protection and restoration, the department of natural resources, the environmental protection agency, or the United States natural resources conservation service;

1. Nancy Stranahan — Arc of Appalachia, 6636 SR 753, Hillsboro, OH 45133, 937-365-1489
nancyoftheforest@gmail.com
2. Rich McCarty — The Nature Conservancy in Ohio, Edge of Appalachia — Eulett Center, 4274 Waggoner Riffle Road, West Union, OH 45693, 937.544.2880 Press 16 (Eulett Center main line). rmccarty@tnc.org
3. Patrick Hornschemeier — Cardinal Land Conservancy, P. O. Box 38, Georgetown, Ohio 45121 Phone (513) 752-0647 phlaw@frontier.com

Group 3 (parks & recreation organizations)

A city park system or metropolitan park system or a board of park commissioners from a county that is located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee, a statewide parks and recreation organization, or the United States national park service.

- Erin Stanley — Ross County Park District, 15 N. Paint St. Suite 301, Chillicothe, OH 45601, 937-509-0774
joeletsche@rosscountyohio.gov

Group 4 (agricultural or forestry, state or federal) A statewide organization representing agriculture, and organization representing forestry interests, the department of agriculture, or the United States department of agriculture

- Benjamin Kelley (Vice Chair) — Ohio Department of Natural Resources — 740-493-2441
benjamin.kelley@dnr.ohio.gov

Group 5 (business, real estate, planning) An organization representing business, local Realtors, or a planning agency, including a Port Authority, located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee.

1. Terri Fetherolf, Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission, Vinton County Development Department, dev.tfetherolf@vintonco.com, 740-596-3529

OPWC POLICIES

The OPWC policies and guidelines should be carefully reviewed before the application materials are submitted to ensure project eligibility and to prevent delays in project evaluation and selection due to non-compliance with program requirements.

To learn more about OPWC policy and guidelines, visit the OPWC Advisories on the OPWC website.
<http://www.pwc.oh.gov/Advisories/Clean-Ohio.html>

DISTRICT 15 NRAC POLICIES

In accordance with OPWC policies, the District 15 NRAC has established the following policies for the evaluation and scoring methodology of project applications.

Agricultural Easements

Agricultural easements are not eligible because they are provided for by the Clean Ohio easement Purchase Program managed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture

Appraisals

All appraisals are required and must be done by an appraiser who is a certified general real estate appraiser holding a current certificate as issued by the Ohio Department of Commerce and is also an Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Prequalified Appraiser credentialed in Appraisal. Applications for open space acquisition that do not include an appraisal report by an ODOT prequalified appraiser will not be considered by the District 15 NRAC. The list of ODOT appraisers and the OPWC appraisal standards can be found at <https://www.pwc.ohio.gov/Project-Administration/Clean-Ohio#594114-appraisal-information>.

- Natural Resource Assistance Council members need to approve any Purchase Contract that exceeds the appraised value. District 15 NRAC will not approve a purchase contract that exceeds the appraised value by more than 5%.
- Any project where a Bargain Sale will be used for match will be required to have the appraisal reviewed by a second appraiser, a certified general appraiser who is a prequalified ODOT Review Appraiser.
- Applicants that have an appraisal review rejected will not be issued a Notice to Proceed by Ohio Public Works until these discrepancies are resolved.
- Properties above appraised value are eligible, but it is important for the NRAC to be cognitive of this difference and must validate the value of properties that are using the difference between the Purchase Contract and appraised value as scored.
- Appraisal expenses are considered an eligible expense under planning and implementation and an Applicant will be reimbursed based on the project's participation ratio.

Five-mile diameter limitation for any one application

A single application may include multiple parcels, but all parcels must fall completely within a five-mile diameter circle, measuring from the farthest boundary to the farthest boundary of the collection of parcels. Applicants may submit multiple applications. If parcels in any one application are farther apart than the five-mile limitation, then the application is not eligible for scoring.

Improvement Projects for Previous Projects

Applications for improvement projects for previously funded Clean Ohio projects are scored as an extension or second phase of the original project.

Land Acquisition

Projects not scheduled for acquisition within twelve (12) months from the date of the Project Agreement will be rejected by OPWC and are not eligible. The District 15 NRAC requires documentation of impending land transactions be included in the application, in one of the following forms:

- A fully executed contract with the owner (signed purchase agreement or options);
- A signed letter of intent to sell (non-contractual)

Any application that utilizes confidentiality agreements in lieu of purchase agreements will not be evaluated.

Mineral Rights / Oil & Gas Leasing

In accordance with OPWC policy, oil and gas leases in place at the time the Natural Resources Assistance Council approves the project will be treated as pre-existing easements which the applicant has little or no control. Requests to engage in new oil and gas leasing on Clean Ohio properties will be denied. District 15 projects that acquire and maintain available mineral, oil, gas and/or extraction rights, on properties, with no active gas and oil wells, as part of the property acquisition will be awarded the full 10 points.

- Requests to engage in oil and gas leasing on Clean Ohio Properties that have been acquired along with the mineral rights will be denied as this is not an activity defined in ORC 164.22 (A) or (B).
- Requests to engage in these activities on Clean Ohio Properties acquired with a third party holding the mineral rights will be dealt with on a case by case basis in conjunction with the OPWC's legal counsel.

Minimum Score Requirement

District 15 NRAC requires a minimum score of 60% of total points available, in order to be recommended for funding. Scores below the minimum score of 60% may be approved provided a vote of support by two-thirds (2/3) of scoring NRAC members

Permanent Protection:

Requests for open space acquisition must include acquisition by land securement. Examples of types of land securements are listed below. Applications for open space acquisition that do not include land securement documentation will not be considered by the District 15 NRAC.

- Fee Simple Purchase or donation
- Easement Purchase or donation

Open Space Improvement projects include construction, restoration or enhancement of site or facilities that are necessary to make the acquired open space area accessible and useable by the general public on properties previously acquired through Clean Ohio. Applications for Open Space Development projects should include one of the following forms of documentation from the Clean Ohio Award: the executed settlement statement, recorded deed and deed restrictions or conservation easements.

Riparian Corridor projects (ORC Sec. 164.22B) must protect or enhance riparian corridors or watersheds including the protection and enhancement of streams, rivers and other waters of the state. Applications for riparian corridor projects that do not include land acquisition must include a draft of OPWC restrictions and the recorded deed or conservation easement in order to be recommended for funding.

Post-Acquisition/In-Kind Activity

All post acquisition activities must be concluded within a two-year period from the date of acquisition unless a formal extension has been approved by OPWC.

Resolutions of Support

Applicants must include a resolution(s) of support with the project application from the respective township trustees and the county commissioners unless the applicant is a park district or otherwise exempt. For further information check OPWC policy: <https://pwc.ohio.gov/Advisories/Clean-Ohio#63956-resolutions-of-support>

Restoration

It is critical to District 15 NRAC that the open space selected for funding initiates or hastens the recovery of the ecosystem present on the land. To be eligible for points, restoration work must comprise a portion of the project scope, budget, or local match and supporting documentation must be included. Restoration projects should be designed to provide the following benefits:

- Enhancing or rehabilitating an open space to an appropriate ecological state or to what it would have become without societal interference;
- Ensuring the integrity and sustainability of the species (flora and fauna) introduced are both native and resilient (can resist disturbance);
- Integrating a community's cultural heritage;
- Providing opportunities for people to appreciate and understand cultural and ecological relationships; and
- Promoting a common vision for greenspace for southern Ohio.

Site Improvements – District 15 NRAC projects using Clean Ohio funds for restoration or site improvements must include an itemized estimate of probable costs for all improvements by an architect, landscape architect, or other qualified professional.

Structures

If there are existing structures on the property being acquired, applicants must provide the appraised value of the structure, proportion of value to the overall value, and the intended actions for the structures (e.g. demolition, re-use).

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

ACQUISITION

- Fee Simple Purchase or Donation
- Easement Purchase or Donation

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Certified Appraisal – which must be *performed by an ODOT Prequalified Appraiser*
- Closing Costs
- Title Search
- Environmental Assessments
- Design

CONSTRUCTION OR ENHANCEMENT OF FACILITIES

Access improvements to make open space accessible and useable by the general public that promote passive recreation and educational opportunities may include, but are not limited to, see full list on OPWC website, <https://pwc.ohio.gov/Programs/Clean-Ohio-Application#591122-eligible-costs> :

- Trails
- Pedestrian Bridges
- Observation Decks
- Kiosks/Signs
- Benches
- Trash Receptacles
- Invasive Species Removal and Plantings for Restoration for the first time.
- Parking Lots
- Fencing

PERMIT, ADVERTISING, AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Administrative services incurred by the applicant. Further examples can be found at OPWC's website. <https://pwc.ohio.gov/Advisories/Clean-Ohio#63933-eligible--ineligible-items>

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All applicants must obtain subdivision code from OPWC prior to applying, <https://pwc.ohio.gov/Advisories/Clean-Ohio#63958-subdivision-applicant-codes>

Local Political Subdivisions

- Counties
- Cities
- Villages
- Townships
- Conservancy Districts
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Joint Recreation Districts
- Park District/Authority

Non-Profit Corporations – A non-profit corporation is eligible to apply if it is exempt from Federal income taxation pursuant to 26 U.S.C 501 (a); and one of its articles of incorporation is directly related to the purposes for which Clean Ohio Conservation grants are issued.

PROGRAM YEAR 18 (2023-2024) INSTRUCTIONS

APPLICATION DUE DATE:

To be considered for financial assistance, applications must be submitted by:

4:00 p.m. Friday, September 29, 2023 at the
Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission,
73 Progress Drive, Waverly, OH 45690 **Phone:** 740-947-2853

INCOMPLETE OR LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE EVALUATED BY THE NRAC.

PY (18) 2024 SCHEDULE

The NRAC has established the following schedule for evaluating and selecting projects for PY 2024. All dates are subject to change.

DATE*	ACTIVITY
Monday, July 3rd, 2023	PY 18 (2024) Application Methodology made available
Friday, September 29th, 2023	Clean Ohio Applications Due by 4:00PM
September 30 th through October 31st, 2023	SITE VISITS Required: Each applicant is required to meet selected NRAC members on site at a pre-arranged time and lead a tour of their project land(s).
Thursday, November 9 th , 2023, 10 am	NRAC Meeting – Applicant Interviews. Determination of eligibility and NRAC members’ open discussion of each application. Required: Each applicant shall present a visual summary of their project(s).
Wednesday, November 15 th , 2023, 10 am	NRAC Meeting – Final Evaluation and Scoring and Project Ranking

GRANTS: Up to 75% of the estimated total project cost can be requested from Clean Ohio: a minimum 25% local match is required.

ELIGIBLE LOCAL MATCH SOURCES:

- The local match is all non-OPWC funds. It can consist of other agency funds (federal, state, or local) or local “pre-pays” for engineering or in-kind work (labor, equipment, materials). Pre-pays, costs paid by the recipient prior to the Project Agreement, may either be reimbursed (up to one year prior to the date of the Agreement) or credited toward the local match.
- Contributions in-kind through the purchase or donation of equipment, land, easements, interest in land, labor and materials necessary to complete the project. See OPWC link here for more information.

<https://pwc.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Documents/PMInKindReportingInstructions.pdf?ver=2013-11-12-150608-727>

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

District 15 NRAC has established a three-phase process to select the projects that will be recommended to OPWC for final evaluation and approval.

PHASE 1: ELIGIBILITY (Per this manual)

NRAC members will meet with all applicants and discuss applicant's eligibility. At this meeting, each applicant is required to present a visual summary of their project to NRAC members, such as with Powerpoint or other similar means. A screen, projector, and computer will be made available to applicants. Powerpoint and Word software will be loaded onto the computer. Applicants are asked to bring a flashdrive of their digital presentation. Applications that are not summarized at this meeting are ineligible for scoring. During this meeting, NRAC members may ask questions of the applicants to further clarify member understandings of the proposed project. NRAC members may request applicants to supply additional information to the members following the meeting. Such additional information is required to remain eligible and will be appended to applicants' respective applications. Requested information must be supplied within the given time frame in order for the application to be considered eligible. Dates and time of site visits will be scheduled at this meeting.

Applications deemed ineligible will not be evaluated by the NRAC (see the NRAC Policy Manual).

PHASE 2: SITE VISITS

During the Phase I Eligibility Meeting, dates and times for site visits will be arranged with applicants, including meeting places. Each applicant must have a representative on site at the agreed upon time and place to greet NRAC members (typically three or more members) and provide them a tour of the project property(s). The tour should not last beyond the span of time agreed upon at the Phase I meeting.

PHASE 3: SCORING

- 3.1 After individually completing the scoring process, members will share their total scores, which will be averaged as a total to give the applications a final ranking.
- 3.2 To be considered for recommendation to OPWC, a project must receive a minimum evaluation score (see above policies) if a project does not receive the required minimum score it may be approved by an affirmative 2/3rd vote of scoring members.
- 3.3 In the case of a tie between two or more projects, the project with the highest percentage of local match will be selected. If still tied after considering percentage of local match, then the project with the greatest dollar amount of local match will be selected.
- 3.4 If the last qualified project on the funding list cannot receive its full funding request, the NRAC will consider a request for partial funding along with a revised budget and project scope.
- 3.5 All final NRAC scores will be submitted to the OPWC for final project review and funding determination.

PY 2023 CLEAN OHIO APPLICATION PROCESS

1. FILL OUT AND SUBMIT THE STANDARDIZED CLEAN OHIO APPLICATION

Clean Ohio has a standardized application form which must be filled out as part of the application in order to be eligible for scoring. The application form and instructions can be downloaded as follows:

[Clean Ohio Application Instructions](#) [Clean Ohio Application](#)

2. SUBMIT DISTRICT 15 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must read and abide by the eligibility requirements as described in District 15 Application Instructions and follow the directives of the District 15 Supplemental Information Application. Download all three files.

[District 15 Supplemental Information & Methodology](#)

[District 15 Financial Spreadsheet Template](#)

REQUIRED FORMATS FOR SUBMISSION

1. **Submissions.** Applicants are required to submit 1 copy of their application to the OPWC WorksWise website, flash drives or paper copies are no longer required. The applicant may request assistance for submitting their applications by contacting the district liaison Isaac Dixon (idxon@ovrdc.org or 740-947-2853). To access OPWC's application portal, see: [Ohio Public Works Commission > WorksWise Training](#)
2. **Submission Components.** Each project application is composed of these general components:
 - a. the Standardized Clean Ohio Application
 - b. the District 15 Supplemental Information Application
 - c. the District 15 Financial Spreadsheet and other required attachments (see below)
3. **File Type.** The standardized Clean Ohio Application must be retained in its original pdf fill-in-the-blank format. District 15 Supplemental Information Application will be downloaded as a Word Docx. For ease, the District 15 Supplemental Information Application may be copied into Publisher, InDesign, or other desktop publishing software to make inserting photos easier. It is highly recommended that you submit your application in pdf file type so that you retain your fonts, page breaks and other design features. The only exception is the District 15 Financial Excel spreadsheet which must be submitted in Excel to preserve the template's formulas.
4. **Answers in Unbolded Font.** For ease in reviewers' reading, District 15's Supplemental Information Application has questions in bolded font. Please change your responses to "regular unbolded font" to allow the reviewers to quickly discriminate between questions and answers.
5. **Required Submission of Separate Attachments.** It is required that the following attachments be submitted as four additional digital files and labeled appropriately. If any of these materials are not part of an application, it is ineligible for scoring. All other reference materials may be included in the Appendix.
 - a. appraisal by ODOT-certified appraiser
 - b. commissioner and trustee resolutions of support if required by ORC

- c. purchase offers for all parcels
 - d. District 15 Financial Spreadsheet – filled out
- 6. **Page Numbers.** District 15's Supplemental Information and the Appendix must be numbered on the bottom of each page. The Appendix must include a table of contents and include page numbers.
- 7. **Photos.** Photos may be optionally used by applicants to support and document the responses to questions. When used for documentation, they should accompany or immediately follow the information they support, with appropriate sub-captions. When specific photos are required as part of the application process, they will be specifically requested.